

*Evaluation  
of the  
Discovering  
Democracy  
Program*

**A Report to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and  
Youth Affairs**

***EREBUS CONSULTING GROUP***

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# Executive Summary

*An overview of the findings and recommendations of this evaluation*

**D***iscovering Democracy* is a Commonwealth program that has been initiated by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) with the aim of improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of students across Australia about their system of government and civic life. The program thus far has focused on the production and dissemination of high quality materials, principally for schools, supported by:

- ◆ coordinated professional development;
- ◆ promotion of program objectives through funding for key stakeholders such as principals, teachers and parents and their professional associations, and
- ◆ the monitoring of outcomes through targeted research activities.

*Discovering Democracy* also provides activities for universities, and the adult and community sector.

The core of the program is designed around curriculum materials that were sent to all schools in kit form in November 1998 to stimulate teaching and learning in this most important area. The program also encompasses a range of other activities, including funding for teacher professional development, teacher pre-service development, and a series of research projects and other national activities.

This evaluation, conducted by the *Erebus Consulting Group*, gathered data from a variety of sources, including:

- ◆ visits to 63 schools across Australia, representing country/city schools; government/non-government schools; and primary and secondary schools;
- ◆ a survey of 8000 teachers in 3000 schools across Australia; and
- ◆ interviews with key stakeholders in civics and citizenship education across the country.

The evaluation took place over the months September-December 1999.

## Findings

While the *Discovering Democracy* program is nearing the end of its funding cycle, the necessary lead-time in producing and disseminating materials and conducting awareness raising through professional development has meant that schools have really had less than a year of effective time for implementation. Consequently, the program has not yet been taken up in any serious way in the majority of Australian schools. In many schools, implementation is scheduled for 2000 because material or training arrived after the completion of planning for the 1999 academic year.

Awareness of the program has increased significantly over the past twelve months. Of the teachers who responded to the national survey in 1999, 80% indicated that they were aware of the *Discovering Democracy* program to some extent. However, 69% of teachers also said that they had no significant experience in teaching the *Discovering Democracy* program.

As would be anticipated for a program in its introductory stages, variation is a key feature of the implementation. There is variation in implementation approaches and stages between states and territories and variation within states and territories. There is also considerable variation between and within schools in the extent to which they have implemented *Discovering Democracy*.

Overall, for those who have knowledge of the program and its materials, there is widespread, though not unanimous, praise. For these people, known as the early adopters, the aims of the program are generally seen as sound and among the most important and valued learning experiences for their students.

As with many aspects of the *Discovering Democracy* program, there are strongly polarised views about the materials in both the primary and secondary school kits. There is some criticism that the material is “too wordy” or “too hard”; assumes prior knowledge that neither the teachers nor students may have; is too much to absorb in a busy teacher schedule; or focuses too much on history. However, other teachers give the material nothing but praise as being well structured, clear, easy to adapt to various student needs, providing all the guidance necessary and reducing the usual need for the teacher to plan and gather resources prior to teaching. The background materials, written by Dr John Hirst, are consistently singled out for praise.

On analysis, the evaluation team have concluded that polarisation of reactions is influenced more by the respondents’ backgrounds, pedagogical preferences, and school contexts than the quality or characteristics of the materials. What separates the exceptional teaching of *Discovering Democracy* from the ordinary is the extent to which the content and accompanying activities are made to live for students. The best teaching saw the social/historical material contained in the kits firmly anchored to students’ current real world experiences. In our school visits, such observations were more often made in primary schools than in secondary schools. The message that emerges from this observation is that, if the program is not to focus on mere acquisition or repetition of facts, classroom implementation support is needed to help teachers bring the program to its fullest potential.

The experiences of schools in this first wave of implementation has raised questions about where the material fits in the overall curriculum and, of course the corollary, what is to be left out to make time for it. In many schools the question of finding time to plan and implement what is seen as a valued but “additional” curriculum element among competing priorities is a burning issue. The most frequent response from teachers regarding perceived barriers to further implementation are the pressures from competing demands on their time and the already “overcrowded” curriculum.

### *The Leading Edge*

For those who are implementing the *Discovering Democracy* program within its intent and spirit, these issues are not problems. In these schools the program, always driven by a

committed school leader or teacher “champion”, is an embedded part of the school culture. Good teaching of *Discovering Democracy* is most often observed where there is good teaching in the school in general.

The personal effort expended by these highly skilled and dedicated teachers, over and above the norm, must be acknowledged widely. Without them, this program would not enjoy its current level of success.

Leading edge schools have ensured the sustainability of *Discovering Democracy* by integrating it as one part of a broader Civics and Citizenship focus across the school’s curriculum, reinforced by many aspects of classroom and school community life. *Discovering Democracy* materials are most frequently used as the basis of integrated studies of society and environment. In many schools in this category, the program material is included for example, in English (debate, written exposition), human relations or personal development (rights and responsibilities) and even mathematics with analysis of voting systems and the like.

Several schools at the leading edge of program implementation have incorporated civics knowledge and approaches to active and informed citizenship across their whole operation. They provide a wide range of activities outside the formal curriculum, but often fully integrated with it, whereby students of all backgrounds and abilities can participate in democratic decision making processes. Such activities include, *inter alia*:

- ◆ student councils
- ◆ class meetings
- ◆ school rallies for and against issues
- ◆ mock referendum with each grade and the staff taking the part of a state and counting the votes as done in a referendum
- ◆ developing and presenting petitions to relevant authorities, including Parliament
- ◆ organising community activities such as cleaning up a creek, developing a garden, visiting the sick or elderly
- ◆ participating in debates about current issues such as Aboriginal reconciliation, the Republic Referendum, the East Timor issue, boat people.
- ◆ conducting fund raising activities for less fortunate people
- ◆ taking part in local issues by becoming informed and simulating the approaches of various debating sides
- ◆ taking part in radio interviews to explore and present their views
- ◆ conducting forums and interviews with local people regarding pressing and controversial issues.

In one school it was salutary to hear that a student who had been suspended several times for rebellious and anti-social behaviour had changed his approach after becoming involved with community volunteers. He was able to recognise and acknowledge through his behaviour that these people, who gave willingly of their time to help out people from backgrounds worse than his own, were worthy role models. In several schools there were stories of student maturity of response to citizenship responsibilities, for example toward the unfortunate people in war torn East Timor or earthquake ravaged Turkey. Timely and salient issues about the Republic, the Referendum in November 1999, the approach of the Centenary of Federation, Aboriginal reconciliation and a host of local issues all provided real opportunities for

students to demonstrate an appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of active and informed citizens.

These schools have taken a sophisticated approach to “uncrowding the curriculum”. The school planners work on the assumption that a singular teaching and learning activity, be it inside or outside the classroom, can provide learning growth across a range of key areas and competencies. Again, what separates this approach from others is the extent to which teachers draw out explicit links between experiences to build students’ understanding, not simply providing multi-purpose activities. They recognise that, while learning requires an understanding of content, it has to be internalised; it has to be personal. They plan so that emotion and action complement cognitive activity to support learning. In these schools *Discovering Democracy* is not a program but an incorporated way of life.

### *Discrete Implementation*

In this category of schools, while some good work may be observed, it is likely to be limited to a single classroom or grade level, a short block of time, or a single topic area. Such work is likely to be a “one-off” event, and not part of any developmental sequence. In such primary schools the approach is to incorporate *Discovering Democracy* material as a unit of work within studies of society and environment. Most often, the kit material is used as an additional resource to support teaching of topics traditionally covered as part of the middle-senior primary syllabus, such as “Gold” and “Local Government”. In such secondary schools, *Discovering Democracy* is most often taught as a particular topic in a civics subject where one exists, but is more often a unit or work in history or geography.

An essential element in all schools implementing *Discovering Democracy* is the presence of commitment and drive from at least one but usually more, staff members who feel strongly regarding the need to educate students about civics and citizenship. Without a strong champion for the program or external influence, the program does not appear to be sustainable in the majority of schools. Where the driving force moves on or becomes burnt-out – features commonly commented upon in all systems and sectors – the program may not continue in other than a paper-based or cursory manner.

Even where there are teachers to champion the program, a range of personal, school or system circumstances often mean that the implementation is limited. Such circumstances may include:

- ◆ an unbalanced focus on content and behaviourist learning alone
- ◆ a focus on student passivity and discipline rather than learning
- ◆ a view of the student as an “empty vessel” to be filled by “knowledge”
- ◆ structural divisions between faculties or grade teams which hinder cross-faculty communication
- ◆ conflicting and competing school priorities
- ◆ timing in relation to school planning
- ◆ subject or learning area divisions
- ◆ external examination requirements; or

- ◆ lack of strong leadership support.

### *Those Yet to Implement*

There remain many schools across the country where little has been done or where what has been done is languishing. In schools where there has been little championing or the priority has not (yet) been implemented – or where teacher champions have moved on – the program has not become established. Given the high rate of teacher turn-over in some areas, this will present a significant challenge.

Even in areas where the program is mandated and the content examined, the phasing in of such changes has provided scope for some schools to wait while others develop work. It is sad to note that in one school a great deal of work was done by a teacher to develop a unit of work that may not be implemented. The work was undertaken in response to a grant but because the syllabus into which the unit would be incorporated is not yet scheduled for implementation in the school, the unit may “sit on the shelf”. This was not an uncommon phenomenon.

For some teachers, feeling overwhelmed by change and the apparent complexities of subject focused curriculum, there is little will to commit to the *Discovering Democracy* program. Others haven't yet accessed either the materials or in-service support to tackle the necessary planning prior to implementation. Here time and distance are key constraining features that combine with the industrial issue of reduced teacher relief funding for professional development that is common to many systems.

### *Curriculum Approaches*

Some states and territories have long-standing approaches to integration of the curriculum at the implementation level. This factor is a facilitator, obviously throughout the primary curriculum, but also where it exists in the curriculum to middle secondary years.

Of particular note in providing underpinning support for the program is the emergence of a philosophy of:

- ◆ bringing integrated learning to the students
- ◆ providing students with a minimum number of teachers
- ◆ providing active and involved learning opportunities in practical application
- ◆ having few formal constraints to the timetable
- ◆ facilitating teachers to work in teams that focus curriculum planning and activities on a particular group of students, rather than on a subject.

This philosophy, characteristic of the middle school movement, appears to be facilitated by, but not necessarily dependent on, the structure and organisation of the school. There are many situations where a school that has students from Years 7 or 8 to the senior school certificate is able to approach the middle years in this way. This can be made to work either within a single organisation, or in consort with feeder primary schools.

Where a civics component, albeit in somewhat remnant form, has been a continuing subject or feature of the curriculum in previous years, there is a clear place for the

incorporation of *Discovering Democracy*. Where there is not, in secondary schools it is often placed within a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), history or geography area. It must be noted however that remnant civics courses are often associated with less rigour than their competing counterparts. Where this is the case, association of *Discovering Democracy* with such courses is not advantageous for its wider adoption.

In many instances the civics component is reduced to an historical study and the citizenship component becomes a study of social or environmental themes. Neither of these approaches fully realises the intent or substance of the program, although the formal requirements may be met. In those areas where there is mandated testing of formal curriculum content, this tends to be the approach taken.

#### *Professional or Curriculum Development Approaches*

Some approaches to program implementation appear more successful than others. States which gave early priority to awareness raising in 1999 tended to have greater take-up than others. Such activities have often included a formal launch of some description that served to give the program status and imprimatur. Such activity indicated the level of system support for the program. It allowed teachers to know how important this program was among the many emerging, competing programs. It was a symbol, a signal that highlighted the commencement of the program.

Provision of teacher relief, travel and accommodation facilitated attendance and led to greater teacher commitment. Where stimulating, community-based presentations occurred, heightened teacher enthusiasm was frequently noted. Local teams were often formed becoming committed to plans to spread the word among their colleagues.

Where the work of such teams was followed up and facilitated by materials provision, resource support to meet and plan, and communication mechanisms to share ideas, units, resources and outcomes, the work continues to grow and spread. In one state the accessing of the Open University course by coordinators throughout the schools has been a focus to train local teacher-facilitators who will undertake to support local teachers in their implementation.

Where follow-up has not occurred the local coordinator can lose momentum; the energy behind the program can dissipate quickly. There is evidence of the program enthusiasm languishing, despite sound efforts in early take-up. This a significant issue that program planners may wish to consider

While the provision of the materials in the form of the kits in particular is seen as pivotal support for the implementation, they alone are not sufficient. In most schools, the material went to the Library. While it may have been drawn to the attention of teachers, it has often been set aside as one among many.

Further stimulus in the form of reminders, seed funding or the provision of some form of professional development activity, invariably led to the materials being re-examined. Where the school was offered a grant, or where some form of in-service support was offered, often the kit was dusted-off for further work.

While the provision of grants for resource trialling or development was unanimously welcomed, this was not sufficient to ensure sound implementation. Sometimes the grant for trialling or unit development meant that the implementation was pigeonholed within the confines of the trial or unit development and spread no further. Often tight timelines and the lack of contact during trial or development were cited as issues that caused the demise or reduction of the program.

Grants seemed to have ranged from \$250 to \$5000. There appears to be no correlation between the size of the grant and the impact on implementation. The seeding funds appear to generate similar activity to the fully funded programs. However, where the grants can be used to buy teacher time, there appears to be more teacher commitment to, and interest in, the program.

It appears that follow up, regular support, opportunities for teacher talk and sharing, and the provision of teacher time were all essential for capitalising on the provision of grant money.

Significant differences in the rate of implementation, curricular approaches, curricular structures, teaching strategies and general attitude towards *Discovering Democracy* exist between primary and secondary schools. Across the country and across educational sectors, there is generally greater support for the use of *Discovering Democracy* materials in primary schools.

## Discussion

The next three years will be critical to the success of the *Discovering Democracy* program. While it has experienced success in some schools, the program needs continuing support. If not, the initiative will certainly diminish, if not flounder.

### *The extent to which the Discovering Democracy program has achieved its purpose so far*

The data gathering process produced findings that clearly indicate schools across Australia are still in the early stages of implementation of the *Discovering Democracy* program. Because of this stage of the implementation, great variation was found both in the depth and breadth of implementation of the program.

In the best schools, teachers demonstrated sound examples of curriculum integration, ongoing and structured professional development initiatives and sound future planning for school wide implementation of *Discovering Democracy* throughout 2000. In these sites students had a clear understanding of what it means to act as responsible citizens and to participate actively within a democracy at school and broader social levels.

At the other end of the continuum many schools are yet to implement the program or even consider planning for its implementation. In these schools, the materials delivered as part of the program often remain unopened.

Across the broader sample of Australian schools, there are particular issues that militate against the implementation of the program. Limitations were experienced by

groups with distinctive backgrounds and characteristics that have not been explicitly acknowledged throughout the material in the kit.

Those schools in more isolated settings have particular difficulties in implementing the program, although there are some outstanding examples of how particular teachers in isolated areas have been able to achieve successful outcomes from the program on the strength of their own initiative. Such problems have been exacerbated for some teachers and students by the absence of teaching and learning materials reflecting relevance to local groups such as indigenous populations. In settings focused on particular religious beliefs, the lack of acknowledgement of some aspects of civics pertinent to religion and culture cause concern. What some perceive as the dominance of a white Anglo-Saxon, middle class approach to civics and citizenship also causes frustration for some teachers, parents and students.

The assessment of student learning outcomes is the weakest aspect of program implementation. Where teachers are considering assessment of student learning outcomes, the evidence indicates little other than a focus on measurement of understanding of content. While assessment needs to be encouraged and supported in the majority of schools where it is undertaken, there is a need for a shift towards a broader understanding and assessment of the range of learning outcomes.

While the current focus of the program is on Years 4 to 10, the evidence from teachers and school leaders in many schools suggests there may be an opportunity to extend its reach both upwards into Years 11 and 12 and downwards from K to 3.

In order to accelerate the implementation process in schools, ongoing funding for structured professional development initiatives, targeted at the level of teacher and school need is imperative. It is clear from case studies, stakeholder interviews and the survey that networking among teachers, both within schools and with their colleagues is an essential element of this professional support.

However, for those teachers and school leaders still unaware of the program and its full intent, there is a clear need for basic information sessions to increase awareness of the program potential, its materials and the system support for it.

*Discovering Democracy* projects have also been undertaken by several groups including: teacher associations; principals; the adult and community education sector; parents; academics and Open Learning Australia. As well as benefiting in-school implementation indirectly, these projects help strengthen stakeholder and education community involvement in the program as a whole. Two national forums have also been held.

#### *The appropriateness of the program strategy*

As noted above, the *Discovering Democracy* program strategy encompasses a range of activities. In relation to in-schools implementation, several aspects of the program strategy have proved supportive and successful. However, several aspects of materials provision and implementation support need careful consideration in the design of future similar programs.

The early investment in the development of materials will bear fruit in the next stages of the program's implementation. The materials are generally perceived as sound.

The funded trialling of materials by self-nominating schools and teachers has potential to support implementation. The potential of this approach will only be realized, however, if schools are treated not as contractors but as co-developers of the units and if some criteria are followed to ensure selection of sites most likely to succeed.

While it was anticipated that the timing of the delivery of the kits at the end of the 1998 school year would prove problematic, this was not found to be significant in the medium term. However, the apparently equal distribution of one kit to each school has brought some criticism. In future materials distribution, it may be appropriate to ask schools to submit a short plan of intent regarding implementation and to indicate how many kits are required to carry out the plan.

In terms of the types of support provided by the systems and sectors throughout the states and territories, there are clear indications that success relates directly to the level of contact and support provided. Awareness raising sessions have been successful in moving the kit from the library to the classroom. While they resulted in some movement towards implementation, the various forms of grants were not found to be sufficient alone to foster incorporation of the program in schools. Overall, ongoing support was found to be the most effective mechanism to broker implementation.

Professional development coordinating committees have been set up in each State and Territory and through them funding provided for State/Territory coordinators, grants to schools and other professional development activities.

Effective in-school implementation requires effective stakeholder and community support. They reinforce each other. A range of projects involving the Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council, the Australian Federation of Societies for the Study of Society and the Environment, the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council are increasing awareness of the *Discovering Democracy* program. Annual *Discovering Democracy* Implementation Forums bring professional developers, classroom practitioners and stakeholder representatives together to share information on best practice and look at ways of taking the program forward.

The *Discovering Democracy* strategy builds on an ongoing self-monitoring and evaluation component. It draws in academic expertise to reinforce best practice approaches and diagnose difficulties as they arise. The University of New South Wales Educational Testing Centre developed assessment instruments for Year 6 and Year 10 students and conducted a National Sample Survey in 1999. *Discovering Democracy* has also funded the development of a national academics consortium primarily to facilitate support for teacher professional development. Such support will be further enhanced by a pre-service teacher education project being conducted by the University of Queensland

*Discovering Democracy* has also included a limited focus on the provision of materials for universities and the adult and community education sector. At this stage there does not appear to be a need for more materials in these sectors but there is a need to promote the resources.

Overall, while the implementation of program support in these areas is vital for the future embedding of the intent, the evidence to date indicates that while these activities have been successful in their own right, they have thus far had limited impact generally, both in terms of Australian society and support for structured activities in schools. The limitation of the success of these associated programs is mainly due to the small reach either gained to date or possible within the current resources and delivery scope. They remain generally successful and supportive for those at the leading edge of program implementation.

From a policy perspective, it is apparent that a clearly defined set of objectives is needed for the next phase of the project. Progress towards the achievement of these objectives needs to be reviewed at the end of that time. The priority for continued funding of the program needs to be directed towards supporting further consolidation and implementation rather than the development of new curriculum materials. It is appropriate that funding for state/territory professional development coordinators be continued. Grants and further copies of the kits need to be provided to support structured professional development in schools, designed to introduce implementation and support extension of implementation in accordance with a plan submitted by the school and approved by the system. Continued funding to facilitate appropriate partnerships supportive of *Discovering Democracy* and for high quality research to inform implementation is also appropriate, but such activities need to be tailored to the revised objectives agreed for the next phase of the program.

*The extent to which Discovering Democracy accords with current and emerging priorities in government policy*

The *Discovering Democracy* program is clearly in accord with the *1999 Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (especially Goals 1.4, 3.4 and 3.5). The goals recognize that:

*“Australia’s future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.”*

The National Youth Roundtable has commended *Discovering Democracy*. Civics and Citizenship education helps young people take their place as inheritors, participants and future leaders in Australian civic life. It helps them engage in civic communities and take their part in the Australian ‘social coalition’. There will be opportunities to address these issues as Australia celebrates its liberal democratic political history in the Centenary of Federation.

In *A New Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (December 1999) the Commonwealth Government supports an appropriate emphasis on the meaning of multiculturalism and links to Centenary of Federation activities in any future *Discovering Democracy* program. Continuation of *Discovering Democracy* can also assist with activities associated with the Centenary of Federation, the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000) and the International Year for Volunteers (2001). It is also in accord with widespread sentiment amongst both opponents and proponents that the recent Republic Referendum highlighted the continuing need for education on constitutional matters.

*The level of understanding of the aims and scope of Discovering Democracy among key stakeholders in the program*

The salient issue of understanding for key stakeholders relates to the perceived scope of the *Discovering Democracy* program and its intentions. At the broader advisory level, the Civics Education Group (CEG) has been instrumental in providing informed guidance for the program. Such quality advice, translated directly at times into the materials for schools, should clearly continue to guide the development of the program in the next phase.

Priority should be given particularly to assist teachers and schools to address the balance between content and process in teaching *Discovering Democracy* including integration of a range of learning areas and other school activities as well as significant civic events. The relationship between state curriculum outcomes and the scope and sequence of the *Discovering Democracy* program needs to be continually updated. State coordinators are best placed to undertake such continuous curriculum mapping roles.

In terms of general support for teachers, the evidence indicates that school leaders can play a pivotal role in facilitating teachers' understanding and implementation of *Discovering Democracy*. Various examples have been cited where principals have reorganized school structures and routines, provided teacher relief and encouraged team-based planning to facilitate implementation.

There is a need to provide ongoing targeted funding to support the various key stakeholders such as teachers, curriculum leaders, principals and parents. They need to be supported to undertake the constructive roles that champions from within their groups have generated to facilitate the delivery of the program.

*Support for the take up of Discovering Democracy materials*

At the practical level, the vast majority of teachers who are implementing the program identified sample units of work, teacher guides and reference material as major resources for planning, teaching and integration with other subject areas. However, the sample units of work need to be constantly updated and linked to other civic events to build their relevance for schools. There is a need for these materials to be accurate, current and inclusive.

While the videos were perceived as a valuable resource for teaching *Discovering Democracy*, only the leading edge teachers appeared to have used excerpts from them in a manner that extracted best possible learning for students. Although the CD-ROM received extensive praise from teachers using it, the reality was that very few teachers had either the opportunity or expertise to fully exploit its value.

A perceived strength of the kit has been the flexible use of the materials by schools. Several secondary schools committed to implementing the program incorporating student populations at varying stages of the learning continuum have readily adapted the Primary Kit for secondary school use. Such implementation reflects the importance of learning continuity from primary to secondary schools that has been captured by the kits.

*The level of teacher skills, knowledge and understanding of Discovering Democracy content and teaching strategies*

The evidence suggests that internal champions for *Discovering Democracy* generally possess a set of skills and a personal commitment towards the ethos of *Discovering Democracy* that overcome perceived obstacles created by a lack of sophisticated understanding about key democratic content and insights.

At a deeper level of professional implementation, the *Discovering Democracy* program challenges some fundamental aspects of teaching practice for many teachers. While the approach inherent in the program materials facilitates student-focused social learning situations that can contribute to high levels of understanding, the kit alone cannot drive fundamental change. The most common implementation approach has seen teachers pick and choose from among many topic areas and activities. While this is not necessarily inappropriate, it does allow some teachers to use the kit material in less educationally productive ways than the potential allows.

Clearly, recognition of what has been achieved to date needs to be promoted and celebrated. Best practice needs to be identified and shared. Small-scale research activities into best practice, focused on the researcher working closely with the practitioner, could be effective in supporting implementation.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to capitalize on the program expenditure to date. They are designed to assist moving the program forward over the next three to four years. Their implementation is essential to foster broader implementation across Australian schools and to further the incorporation into the schools already undertaking the program. The recommendations are grouped under a number of headings corresponding to the terms of reference for the evaluation.

*The extent which the Discovering Democracy program has achieved its purpose so far*

It is recommended that:

- ◆ the Commonwealth continue to fund the *Discovering Democracy* program for a further 3-4 year period although at a reduced level and with a different focus from earlier phases;
- ◆ greater priority be given to assisting schools to more effectively assess student outcomes from their teaching of *Discovering Democracy*, and that a shift in focus from assessment of content to assessment of learning outcomes be facilitated by the further development and dissemination of assessment materials;
- ◆ support be given to a variety of voluntary state and territory initiatives for extension of *Discovering Democracy* into Year 11 & 12, but another set of curriculum learning units should not be created.
- ◆ the program be extended to years K (or R) to 3, supported by adaptation of the existing curriculum materials.

*The appropriateness of the program strategy*

It is recommended that:

- ◆ a clearly defined set of objectives for the next phase of the project be identified and that progress towards the achievement of these objectives be reviewed at the end of that time;
- ◆ the revised set of objectives should include recognition of the opportunities provided by *Discovering Democracy* for genuine integrated learning across the curriculum (particularly where civics and citizenship principles are embedded in the life of the school);
- ◆ the priority for continued funding be directed towards supporting the further consolidation and implementation of the program rather than the development of new curriculum materials;
- ◆ funding for state/territory professional development coordinators be continued;
- ◆ grants and further copies of the kits be provided to support structured professional development in schools, designed to introduce implementation and support extension of implementation in accordance with a plan submitted by the school and approved by the system;
- ◆ a national benchmarking project be created to establish an appropriate set of standards in Civics and Citizenship education. This would reinforce the baseline study of student performance and assist schools with their assessment of student outcomes;
- ◆ Projects for principals, teacher associations and academics be continued over the next three to four years as much remains to be achieved by these groups to secure the implementation of *Discovering Democracy*. Links between the three groups should be encouraged.

*The level of understanding of the aims and scope of Discovering Democracy among key stakeholders in the program*

It is recommended that:

- ◆ the Civics Education Group (CEG) continue to provide an advisory and oversight role in relation to the *Discovering Democracy* program;
- ◆ state professional development coordinators give priority to assisting schools in adopting approaches towards teaching *Discovering Democracy* that emphasise an appropriate balance between content and process and encourage wider inclusion across learning areas and other school activities;
- ◆ the Commonwealth assist each state and territory to indicate the relationship between state curriculum outcomes and a scope and sequence of *Discovering Democracy* activities in order to devise a national 'picture' of *Discovering Democracy* in the school curriculum over the next 3 to 4 years;
- ◆ at an appropriate time a strategy be formulated and implemented, in conjunction with State/Territory professional development coordinators, to stimulate teacher awareness of *Discovering Democracy*. This might be around March 2001;
- ◆ funding be considered for the development of a pre-service teacher education program to support *Discovering Democracy*. This should be in addition to the

materials and activities prepared by the University of Queensland's current project.

*Support for the take up of Discovering Democracy materials*

It is recommended that:

- ◆ limited funding support be provided to ensure that *Discovering Democracy* curriculum material is accurate, current and inclusive, particularly in regard to the needs of Indigenous students;
- ◆ the preferred means for dissemination of curriculum and support materials be through a dynamic means such as a website;
- ◆ appropriate mechanisms be established for the development and management of such a website, the location and operation of which be determined through competitive tendering;
- ◆ consideration be given to the rationalization of web sites currently developed by systems and sectors so that all teachers have access to materials and ideas produced by others, and so that national teacher interaction is encouraged.

*The level of teacher skills, knowledge and understanding of Discovering Democracy content and teaching strategies*

It is recommended that:

- ◆ the focus of *Discovering Democracy* support in the future be teacher professional development with State & Territory professional development committees encouraged to use a networking approach to delivery of professional development;
- ◆ that the Commonwealth support activities to promote best practice, which might include:
  - national, state and local activities which recognize and celebrate achievements under the auspices of the *Discovering Democracy* program, such as national awards for outstanding civic educators;
  - small scale research into best practice in teaching *Discovering Democracy* and what makes a difference to student learning;
  - sharing of school based approaches and material to disseminate best practice through publication of information in both hard copy and through the website.

*Education activities to support national priorities in government policy*

It is recommended that the CEG identify ways to:

- ◆ co-ordinate activities with the National Council for the Centenary of Federation celebrations;
- ◆ acknowledge and integrate in future *Discovering Democracy* activities the Government supported recommendations of the recently released document *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (December, 1999);
- ◆ integrate future activities in *Discovering Democracy* with the Government's initiatives in literacy. Civic literacy is an important component of a comprehensive literacy program for schools.